Arshusha II

(r. 455 – c. 470)

BRIEFING

Arshusha II (birth unknown - died 470 or 467, between 467 and 470) - Iranian prince of the Mikhranid clan from Gugark fifth pitiakhsh of Gugark. He was the father of his successor Varsken.

SOURCES

His son Varsken's claim to the Iberian throne makes a relationship with the Iberian royal family probable, but the exact connection is not clear from contemporary documents.

The American historian Kirill Tumanoff, based on the Royal Chronicles of Kartli, attested in the 11th century and possibly dating back to the 8th century, suggests that Arshusha II, son of Bakur II, was a vitax , married around 449/455 to Khvaramza, daughter of Mirdats V, King of Iberia. Bakur II himself was the son of Arshusha I, Prince of Tashir, mentioned in 430. This proposal, however, creates a chronological problem, since Varsken, son of Arshusha, was already married and had several children in 475, and it is difficult to see how he could be the grandson of Bakur II, who married at the earliest in 449, or 26 years earlier.

For the French historian Christian Settipani, Arshousha would be identical to the prince of Tashir from 430 and grandson of Bosmarius or Burz-Mihr II, Vitax, and Osduhtu, sister of Pharsmanes IV, king of Iberia from 383 to 408.

BIOGRAPHY

Upon his accession to the throne, the Sasanian King Yazdegerd II pledged to convert Armenia to Mazdaism . Around 449, he issued a decree demanding that the Armenians renounce their faith. In response, the nobles and clergy issued a manifesto pledging their absolute obedience but renounced any thought of apostasy and denied the Persian king the right to interfere in religious affairs. The king then summoned the chief nakharar , who traveled to the Persian court. Despite protests of goodwill and loyalty from the Armenian nobles, Yazdegerd II demanded that his Armenian vassals prostrate themselves before the sun in accordance with the Mazdaite ritual. A Christian bailiff advised them to resort to a trick: performing the required prostrations while addressing prayers to God. But such an action was repugnant to Vardan Mamikonyan , the most powerful of the nakharars, and it took all of Arshusha’s persuasion for Vardan to agree to perform the required ritual gestures.

Suspicious, Yazdgard decided to hold hostages at court, including Arshusha, two sons of the marzpan Vasak Syuni , and several other nobles. Nakharar returned to Armenia accompanied by Mazdaite priests, who pledged to close the churches and build temples. Very quickly, led by the Christian clergy and then the nobility, the Armenian people revolted. Vardan Mamikonian led the uprising, known as the Battle of Avarayr, which was suppressed on June 2, 451. His brother, Hmayak Mamikonian, was soon killed in Tayk by Vasak Syuni, who seized Hmayak's three sons (Vahan, Vasak, and Artases) and sent them as hostages to Ctesiphon.

Returning to Armenia, Arshusha managed to purchase the freedom of his nephews, the Mamikonians, in 455 and bring them back to Armenia to their mother. He raised them with Lazar Parpechi and Shushanik , the daughter of Vardan Mamikonian, to whom he later married his son Varsken.